



NOTES FROM THE:

Deputy Assistant Secretary, Financial Operations

by Mr John J. Nethery

New Travel Card. NationsBank's VISA card has been selected to be the new Department of Defense (DoD) travel card. This travel card will replace the American Express (AmEx) card effective 30 November 1998 at 12:01 am and will work in much the same manner as the AmEx card. The VISA card is accepted at over 14.5 million locations in over 230 countries. Card program managers will see improvements in the tools available to them including on-line, internet software containing training information newsletters, and account management capabilities. As we work through the transition process we will provide command and base card managers with updated information and training. Remember, the AmEx card remains in force until midnight, 29 November 1998, and we will have to continue to work this program aggressively.

Improvement of Financial Management Strategic Plan. The FY1998 National Defense Authorization Act requires DoD to submit to Congress, by 30 September of each even-numbered fiscal year, a strategic plan for the improvement of financial management within DoD. The plan will include a "Concept of Operations" (CONOPS) that describes the manner in which DoD accounting and finance functions and operations will be conducted in the future. DoD Comptroller personnel will lead the effort to construct the CONOPS. We provided initial input to that effort in mid May, covering many of the Air Force efforts at financial reform and system improvements. We have since followed up with additional inputs. At the same time, we have been working hard to develop a more detailed, Air Force specific plan oriented towards the processes for obtaining and compiling the information needed to prepare annual Air Force financial statements that can pass audit scrutiny. Along with other DoD components, the Air Force has experienced increased pressure in recent months to obtain clean audit opinions on FY99 statements. We will pass along pertinent information from these plans once they have been completed and approved.

Accounting for Property, Plant, and Equipment. The Federal Accounting Standards Advisory Board (FASAB) has recommended important changes in the accounting standards for Property, Plant, and Equipment (PP&E). Effective FY1998, PP&E must be accounted for in four new categories, i.e., National Defense PP&E (weapons systems), Heritage Assets (PP&E

with cultural, architectural, aesthetic characteristics), Stewardship Land (land not used in connection with General PP&E), and General PP&E (buildings, fire trucks). National Defense PP&E, Heritage Assets, and Stewardship Land will be removed from the Balance Sheet and accounted for on a quantity only basis in a Supplementary Stewardship Report. General PP&E will remain on the Balance Sheet and accounted for in accordance with prescribed accounting standards. We are currently working the implementation of the new standards.

Accounting OJT Training Guides. The accounting OJT training guides are now available on the SAF/FM Home Page under "Enlisted Matters" (<http://www.saffm.hq.af.mil/SAFFM/>). Also included are guides for disbursing, financial analysis, and travel. The military pay guides are in the final edit stage. The training guides are excellent tools for members in upgrade training or used as qualification training in the case of a transfer to a new position. The guides are primarily directed at enlisted training, however, we have received excellent feedback from civilian employees and supervisors who take advantage of the scenario-based training tools. Recommended changes or updates to the guides should be sent to SMSgt Mike Sizemore at the following email address: sizemorm@af.pentagon.mil.

Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA). SAF/FM and AF/XPX (Air Force Plans and Programs, Strategic Planning) have prepared a Strategic Plan and a Performance Plan for the Air Force as directed by the GPRA of 1993. Volume 2 of the Strategic Plans deals with the GPRA. The three goals established are: operations performance, quality personnel, and modernization. Some examples of the 26 performance measures established to indicate our progress in meeting these goals include: mission capable rates, SORTS, personnel quality, retention, reenlistments, quality of life, flying hours flown, flying hour costs, logistics response time, operating results of supply and depot operations, and cost and schedule variance of major acquisition programs. The documents were developed using inputs from the Air Staff and major commands obtained through the Strategic Planning Board of Directors meetings. The documents will next be coordinated through OSD before submission to the Congressional committees.